Nash and Davidson Monuments

Full Text of the Debate Between Congressmen Cannon and Kitchin.

Showing Mr. Kitchin's Faithful Work on Behalf of the Bill and his Expressed Opinion, that Guilford Battle Ground Should Have the Monuments.

MONUMENTS TO

GENERALS FRANCIS NASH AND WILLIAM LEE DAVIDSON.

Congressional Record, Fifty-Seventh Congress, First Session.
Washington, D. C., July 1, 1902.

Mr. William W. Kitchin. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for the present consideration of house joint resolution No. 16, to carry into effect two resolutions of the Continental Congress directing monuments to be erected to the memory of Generals Francis Nash and William Lee Davidson of North Carolina.

The joint resolution was read, as follows:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled, That the sum of $5,000 be, and the same is hereby, appropriated for the erection of a monument in honor of the memory of Brigadier General Francis Nash, of North Carolina, according to the resolution of congress passed on the 4th day of November, 1777.

Sec. 2. That a like sum of $5,000 be, and the same is hereby, appropriated for the erection of a monument in honor of the memory of Brigadier General William Lee Davidson, of North Carolina, in accordance with the resolution of congress passed on the 20th day of September, 1781.

Sec. 3. That the Secretary of the Treasury shall pay the sums appropriated to the order of the governor of North Carolina whenever required for the purposes aforesaid.

The following amendment recommended by the committee was read:

Strike out section 3 of the bill and substitute therefor the following:

Sec. 3. That the site for the location of said monuments, the designs for the same, the conduct of the work of erection, and the disbursement of the money hereinafter appropriated shall be under the direction of the secretary of war, who shall, however, act jointly with the Governor of the State of North Carolina, as far as may be practicable, in the selection of a location for said monuments."

The Speaker. Is there objection?

Mr. Cannon. Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the gentleman, has this been authorized by law or is this the authorization?

Mr. Kitchin. This is the authorization.

Mr. Cannon. Two monuments are to be erected somewhere in North Carolina to the memory of two Revolutionary soldiers?

Mr. William W. Kitchin. Two brigadier-generals who fell in the forefront of a battle in the Revolutionary war. These monuments were once authorized by the Continental Congress.

Mr. Cannon. Why were they not put up under that authorization?

Mr. William W. Kitchin. It may have been on account of the disturbed condition of the country, or on account of the poverty of the Continental treasury. In any event, the monuments were not built, although they were authorized by the Continental Congress.

Mr. Cannon. Mr. Speaker, it is ungracious to object.

Mr. William W. Kitchin. I hope the gentleman will not.

Mr. Cannon. But this thing of monuments, seems to me, ought to be confined, except in very rare instances—and it seems to me the exceptions are not wise—to the District of Columbia.

Mr. Richardson of Tennessee. They are old acquaintances of my friend from Illinois. I think he was born in North Carolina about that time. (Laughter.)

Mr. Cannon. They died just before I can recollect; but I know my friend from Tennessee had full acquaintance with them. (Laughter.)

Mr. William W. Kitchin. Before the gentleman from Illinois interposes an objection, I would like to say this to him: That one of these generals, General Nash, was the colonel of the First North Carolina Regiment. He was afterwards promoted to brigadier-general, and was ordered to join General Washington in the North, where he served under the eye of the great commander with distinction, and at the battle of Germantown, Pa., now in the city of Philadelphia, he was was mortally wounded and died a few days afterwards. He is buried in the Mennonist burial ground in Kulpsville, Montgomery County, Pa.

The Continental Congress thereafter, in a resolution mentioning his gallantry and bravery, authorized the erection of a monument to his memory. General Davidson was born in Pennsylvania, but moved to North Carolina when a child. He was first major and finally brigadier-general. He fought in the battles of Brandywine, Monmouth, and at Germantown, where General Nash fell. He was severely wounded at the battle of Calsons Mill, and was killed at the engagement of Cowans Ford, on the Catawba River, in North Carolina, resisting Cornwallis' march northward. Both of these men fought for their country's liberty, and they poured out their life's blood in that behalf. I say to the gentleman from Illinois that the original resolutions in the Continental Congress which recognized these two brave soldiers directed the Governor of North Carolina to build the monuments, and left their location to the discretion of the Governor of North Carolina.

We have in North Carolina the Guilford Battle Ground Association. It has reclaimed this famous battle ground at Guilford Court House, which Mr. Benton, in his "Thirty Years in the United States Senate," says led inevitably to Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown. This battle ground has been reclaimed by the patriotic citizens, who have also erected many small monuments there, and on the Fourth of July of each year thousands of people from various parts of our state pay tribute to the principles of liberty, independence, and sacrifice which actuated our revolutionary ancestors. I certainly hope that the gentleman from Illinois, with this explanation, will not object to the present consideration of the resolution. I think these monuments ought to be erected.

The location is left with the secretary of war and the Governor of North Carolina, so far as the governor can aid him in it, and in my opinion Guilford Battle Ground should be the spot favored with their location.

Mr. Cannon. Well, these were two gallant soldiers, I have no doubt. The Continental Congress acted in word, but not in deed. So far as these gallant men are concerned, following the doctrine of Swedenborg, they know nothing of it.

Mr. Sulzer. Are you a Swedenborgian?

Mr. Cannon (continuing). No doubt there are other heroes in the celestial heavens, wherein we all hope to attain a position. Simply and purely from a standpoint of public service—although it may seem to be, perhaps, not a courteous thing to do—from sympathy with everybody who performs his duty well, having broken the record as our friends will claim, and come pretty near to it, as we will admit, let us leave something for the liberality of Congress and the Treasury to do at the next session. We will absolutely have nothing to do to earn our salary. I must now, with all due respect to my friend, purely impersonally, object.

Mr. William W. Kitchin. Mr. Speaker, I regret that the gentleman objects, and move to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution No. 16, with the amendment that the Committee on the Library recommends.

The Speaker. Does some one object to unanimous consent?

Mr. Cannon. I think I object, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker. The gentleman objects. The gentleman from North Carolina moves to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution with the amendment recommended by the committee.

Mr. Cannon. On that I demand a second.

Mr. William W. Kitchin. Mr. Speaker, I ask that a second may be considered as ordered.

The Speaker. Is there objection? (After a pause.) The Chair hears none. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina on the one side and the gentleman from Illinois on the other.

Mr. William W. Kitchin. I merely wish to say, Mr. Speaker, in addition to what I have said, that this bill, or a similar resolution, has passed the Senate for the last three Congresses and in thef orm in which it was introduced into this Congress. The Committee on the Library offer an amendment, striking out the third section and inserting a new section, pertaining to the location and design of this monument. I will say to the gentleman from Illinois that we have already passed some monument bills during this session, one carrying an appropriation of $25,000 and one $50,000 and one of $100,000——

The Speaker. The gentleman from North Carolina will suspend. The Committee on Naval Affairs desires to present a conference report on the naval appropriation bill.

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Mr. William W. Kitchin. Mr. Speaker——

The Speaker. The gentleman from North Carolina has nineteen minutes remaining.

Mr. William W. Kitchin. Mr. Speaker, if I can have the attention of the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Cannon), I wish to say that the House has been liberal with the monument bills that it has considered so far during this session. We have pased a bill asuthorizing a monument to Gen. Hugh Mercer, also a Revolutionary hero, that carried $25,000 and directs that the monument shall be built in the city of Fredericksburg, Va. That, it seems to me, is a striking precedent for the location of these monuments in the State of North Carolina if the Secretary of War should so decide, for he will have the decision of that question, acting with the governor of North Carolina as far as practicable.

We have also passed a bill for a hundred thousand dollars to commemorate the martyrs of the British prison ships. We have passed a bill appropriating $25,000 to take the preliminary steps toward a monument to President Lincoln. How can the gentleman from Illinois find it in his heart to oppose this little bill for $10,000? I venture to say that it is the smallest bill of this character and equal merit that this House has ever been called upon to consider. Substantially the same proposition had the support of the Continental Congress. This bill has passed the Senate repeatedly, and it has been favorably reported by the proper committee of this House three times, now, to my knowledge, and I do not know how many times before.

The gentleman says that building a monument to these men will do them no good. Is the gentleman going to erect that great monument which he a few days ago advocated for President Lincoln's benefit? Not a bit of it. Does Washington's monument stand down there for the benefit of George Washington? Not a bit of it. Why, the gentleman from Illinois knows that we build monuments because of the purest sentiments that come from the human heart— in order to bless the living, in order to encourage those great principles that guided the lives of the men whom we honor by monuments. We build monuments to patriots to teach men patriotism, to teach men that when they act patriotically, their descendants and other generations will honor them. If monuments should be built to any men, they should be built to those who have died in the cause of human liberty, in the cause of national independence, who died resisting the oppressions of British rule and British colonialism. How can you find a man more fit to be honored by a monument than General Nash, who fell at the battle of Germantown, or General Davidson, who fell resisting the march of Cornwallis north through Carolina?

So I think if you want to teach the people of North Carolina patriotism, if you want to tie them in closer bonds to this government, you should erect these monuments there, paid for out of the federal treasury. Erect them at this great gathering place (Guilford Battle Ground) where the patriotism of North Carolina comes together on the Fourth of July. If the gentleman from Illinois will help me in this he will do a great service to the people, because when you encourage the spirit of patriotism in any section of this great country you are helping the grand total of our people in that respect. (Applause).

I reserve the remainder of my time

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Mr. Cannon. I ask the attention of the House for a minute because in the closing hours of the session, when everybody is feeling good and hoping to get home soon, everything is relaxed here and we do things all along the line that we would not have done at any other period in the session. I am always very glad when the hammer falls and final adjournment occurs, because on a day like this no one realizes exactly the scope of what we do.

I was born in North Carolina. (Applause.) Somebody said once "You could not help yourself." (Laughter). But I am proud of being born there, in a Quaker settlement of small landowners—humble, God-fearing people, better than their descendants in that respect, perhaps. A way back sixty years ago we went over the moutains to the wilderness of the West. Now, my birthplace, while I have not been there since that time, is dear to me. My home where I have lived for sixty years is dear to me. And I will say again that perhaps it may seem ungracious to oppose a bill like this. I am proud of the history of North Carolina, and of every State. I am proud of the achievements of the Revolutionary fathers. I am proud of the achievements of the heroes of 1812, and of the Mexican war, and of the civil war, and of the late war. But, after all is said and done, I sometimes grow a little weary when the common patriotism and common pride in the progress of our race is made an excuse to do this, that, aud the other, that really no great number of people desire to have done. I had not much pride in what happened yesterday touching two appropriations, but that is past and gone. I am not here to scold about it.

I doubt the propriety of making appropriations from the National Treasury to erect monuments anywhere outside of the District of Columbia. Here we are supreme, the capital of the nation. Here we gather the revenues and make the expenditures. Here is where all the people come. So that I have quite generally voted for whatever memorials have been proposed, if they came in due shape with the emplacement thereof here. I sometimes could wish that all the great battlefields and everything that would memorialize great events of our history could be marked. Many of them are.

Mr. William W. Kitchin. May I ask the gentleman a question?

Mr. Cannon. Just a moment. I will yield to you before I get through. Many of them are. There is scarcely a county throughout the northland but what you will find monuments to the memory of the soldiers who fought for the union in the late war. Constructed how? By the people. The men and the women and the children have taken up collections here and there and accumulated them until, five, ten, or twenty-five thousand dollars have been collected, and each man, woman, and child feel as if there had been sacrifice made for the monuments that commemorate the achievements of the illustrious dead. That which cost something we appreciate.

Sometimes I have felt that an objection to our higher school system is that it has not cost much. That people appreciate the common-school system—the three R's are all right from the standpoint of national good and national education, but we have got in the habit of injecting hypodermically, it seems to me, education which comes with trifling cost into people that do not want it. We appreciate, I say again, that which costs something, and that patriotism that causes people in the various localities to lay aside a dollar here and there and gather it together and erect a monument is the right kind of action and the right kind of sentiment to foster.

I have sometimes wished, and I am inclined to think I would possibly vote for the erection of a monument at the national expense to commemorate the battle of Kings Mountain, where the mountaineers, reenforced under the lead of Gen. John Sevier by Tennesseans, after a long march through valley and over mountain, fought the great battle. (Applause on the Democratic side.) But I would prefer not to go beyond that. True, we voted to erect a monument to the memory of General Mercer down in Virginia. I think that was a mistake from the standpoint that I am speaking of, and I believe now that the best way is to stop the construction of monuments to commemorate the character and services of illustrious men from the beginning of our history outside of Washington, so that I have demanded a second, and I feel as one that it is my duty to vote "no" upon this proposition. Now I yield to my friend.

Mr. William W. Kitchin. I ask the gentleman, after reminding him that the patriotic citizens of North Carolina have contributed their money and built several monuments on Guilford Battle Ground, whether the gentleman—since the Continental Congress, composed of the contemporaries of these brave men, had authorized the governor to erect monuments to them—does not think that would except this joint resolution from the ordinary monument cases and justify him in supporting monuments for these men outside of the District of Columbia?

Mr. Cannon. I will say to my friend it seems to me not. I recollect in my service in the House that Congress did make a small appropriation toward the improvement of the battlefield of Guilford Court-house, and that has been expended with contributions made by the patriotic citizens of the locality and of North Carolina. But Congress took good care after it made this donation to divorce itself from the maintenance. Now, this is upon a different ground. That is all I have to say about it.

The Speaker. The question is on suspending the rules and passing the bill.

The Speaker proceeded to put the question.

Mr. Cannon. I think I will take a rising vote.

The house proceeded to divide.

Mr. Cannon (during the count). Mr. Speaker, it is evidently the sense of the House that the bill pass, and I withdraw the demand for a division.

The Speaker. Two-thirds having voted in favor thereof, the rules are suspended and the joint resolution as amended is passed.